

Transportation Working Group Recommendations for Transportation Efficiency Fund Uses

1) Transit Capital and Operating funds – In the past, the state has bonded for a share of the local match for capital. Typically, the Federal Transit Administration provides 80%, the state pays 10% and the local communities pay 10%. In recent years the policy at MaineDOT has been that the state would pay 15% if the equipment is an alternatively fueled vehicle, allowing the local communities to pay just 5%. Last year, there was no transit capital in the highway bond, which means municipalities are on the hook for the full 20%.

The greatest challenge for transit providers is operating funds. The percentages vary by provider (based on their “fare box return”) but presently, FTA urban and rural funds can be used to pay for up to 50% of operating costs. Greater Portland METRO, for example, takes in approximately 25% of those costs through fares. The other 25% is assessed to the member municipalities and represents only a portion of the overall local share. Furthermore, it is possible that the Portland MSA will exceed 200,000 in population from the recent census. If that happens, the PACTS MPO will become a Transportation Management Area and the transit providers will no longer be allowed to use urban funds for operating – meaning that the local towns will be responsible for ~75% of their operating costs!

2) Alternative Fuel Infrastructure – If the state is to reduce its dependence on imported petroleum, it must begin to transition its vehicles to alternative fuels such as: natural gas, propane, electricity, biodiesel and other renewable fuels that are being developed – some of them right here in Maine. The biggest impediment to anyone considering an AFV is the availability of alternative fuel. The state could dedicate some of the proceeds of the fund to leveraging private investment in infrastructure and vehicles. The sites would be publicly accessible and located where they could serve anchor fleets. In addition, a portion of the funds could go directly into the State's Clean Fuel Vehicle Fund https://www10.informe.org/webshop_ifw/index.php?storeID=7. This would allow FAME to offer low interest loans for developing infrastructure and purchasing Alt Fuel Vehicles. (MaineDOT does not support this measure.)

3) GO Maine Program - The GO MAINE commuter vanpool program plays an important role in Maine by “increasing the energy efficiency of or reducing reliance on fossil fuels within the transportation system,” providing convenient, comfortable, money and energy-saving commuter travel to and from work for many Maine citizens. Projected capital needs for expanding vanpool services total \$1,268,000. Projected capital needs for replacing existing vehicles in the fleet total \$1,186,000. Combined, the total projected capital needs of the GO MAINE vanpool program between 2010 and 2014 = \$2,454,000. Combined total annual passenger boardings for this vehicle total equals = 370,440. (MaineDOT provisionally supports expanding the GO MAINE program, but exact routes will be dependant upon need at the time of available funding.)

PROJECTED NEW ROUTES

1. Sanford > Kittery (1)
2. Sanford > Biddeford-Saco (1)
3. Sanford > Kennebunk (1)
4. Kittery-York-Wells > Portland (1)
5. Lakes Region > Portland (2)
6. Auburn-Lewiston > Portland (4)
7. Portland > Auburn-Lewiston (2)
8. Bath-Brunswick > Portland (2)
9. Portland-Topsham > Augusta (4)
10. Augusta > Topsham-Portland (4)
11. Bangor > Augusta (2)
12. Aroostook area > DFAS-Limestone (2)
13. Skowhegan > Augusta (1)
14. Pittsfield-Newport > Bangor (2)
15. Ellsworth > Bangor (1)
16. Dover-Foxcroft > Bangor (1)
17. Millinocket > Bangor (1)
18. Rockland-Belfast > Bangor (1)
19. Belfast > Augusta (1)
20. Rumford-Mexico > Augusta (1)
21. Portland > Freeport-Brunswick (2)

Total need = 37 vehicles (rough breakdown: 20 13-passenger full-size, 17 7-passenger minivans)

Together, these new vanpool vehicles and routes placed in service would equate to 191,016 passenger boardings annually.

REPLACEMENTS

- 6 - 2003, 2004, 2005 full-size vehicles should be replaced soon
- 8 – 2007 full-size vehicles should be replaced in 2012
- 3 – 2008 full-size vehicles should be replaced in 2013
- 5- 2009 full-size vehicle should be replaced in 2014
- 10 – 2009 minivans should be replaced in 2014

The current vehicles that require replacement over the next 5 years equate to 179,424 passenger boardings annually.

BUDGET 2010 THRU 2014

New Route Vehicles

20 13-passenger @ \$43,000 = \$860,000
17 7 passenger @ \$24,000 = \$408,000

Replacement Vehicles

22 13-passenger @ \$43,000 = \$946,000
10 7-passenger @ \$24,000 = \$240,000

TOTAL PROJECTED NEED 2010 THRU 2014 = \$2,454,000

4) Safe Routes to School Program -The Transportation Enhancements program brings federal dollars to MaineDOT. The funds are required to be spent on one of 12 eligible uses. These uses include bicycle and pedestrian safety education and infrastructure projects. In Maine, a competitive process accepts applications from municipalities for improvements to the built environment that emphasize bicycle and pedestrian safety, opportunities for economic development, and improved transportation linkages. The funds require a 20% municipal match.

Similarly, the Safe Routes to School (a federally-mandated program through the Fed. Trans. Bill) provides funds for bicycle and pedestrian safety projects within a 2-mile radius of an elementary or middle school. In this case the federal funds can pay for 100% of the project. Safe Routes to School encouragement activities are also supported through these funds.

In 2010, 45 Communities applied for a total of \$36 million dollars of bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements in Maine. In past years, MaineDOT has only been able to fund approximately \$8 million per biennium using federal transportation dollars.

Examples include sidewalks leading to schools, bicycle facilities such as the Kennebec River Rail Trail and improving the accessibility (per ADA guidelines) of existing sidewalks and bike/pedestrian bridges.

It is critical for bicycle and pedestrian safety that the road system includes sidewalks, shoulders, and safe and visible crossings, where needed and feasible. Investing in these improvements are critical to reducing energy use and clean air. Providing safe access for bicyclists and pedestrians on the transportation system and improving village environments are also key elements necessary to address key economic, safety, and mobility issues in Maine.

Additional funds could assist in meeting the needs of additional communities across Maine, particularly those without the tax base to fund the 20% match requirement.

5) Biodiesel -- MaineDOT would support expanding its biodiesel fleet to include large trucks and work vehicles.